Lafayette Historical Society Newsletter

PO Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549

President: Marechal Duncan (283-6812)
Vice President: Diddo Clark (906-0966)

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February 1995

President's Message

Another year has passed and 1995 is here with its many opportunities and challenges. The cooperative open house with the Assistance League of Diablo Valley for the Centennial Celebration of the Wayside Inn was very successful and well-attended. We were presented a proclamation from the City of Lafayette by our Mayor, Ann Grodin.

The Society recently received a "Thank You, Lafayette Historical Society" binder in which twenty-three students from Burton Valley Elementary School, Room 21, each wrote his/her own personal one page thank you for the Walking Tours conducted by our members. Incidentally, Collette Means, who has headed our walking tour group, has retired from the task, and we need volunteers to assist in this worthwhile project. The Society certainly thanks Collette for all her time and efforts.

We also thank Shirley Thomson for her 10 years as editor of our Newsletter. Shirley has retired from the editor's job to devote more time compiling data for cemetery inscription source books, and she will move to Lithuania early this year. As noted in our last newsletter, we have a senior English major from St. Mary's College who will be our editor until mid-1995 when Elly Conrad, a new Society member, will be our permanent editor.

Robert Warren Brown presented our Society with a pair of branding irons; one, the brand of Elam Brown, and one, the brand of Warren Brown. These are on display in our Lafayette Library in a special case with irons, calf hide, brand registration and acknowledgment.

We are already working on Lafayette's 150th Anniversary, but that doesn't occur until 1998. As for 1995, we are actively working on getting new members of all ages. We ask that each of you please tell your neighbors, your friends, and your family members about the Lafayette Historical Society. Invite them to join. We want new people with new ideas. We also want our current members to come forth with ideas, with their own experiences or stories they have heard in regards to history in our city, our country, our state.

One hundred and forty-seven years of Lafayette is a lot of history. The tidbits which some of you may be able to submit will certainly enrich our Society's archives.

The Lafayette Historical Society has a lot to offer the citizens of Lafayette, but we need the help and ideas from each of our members.

Best Wishes for a historical 1995.

Marechal Duncan

Marechal Duncan

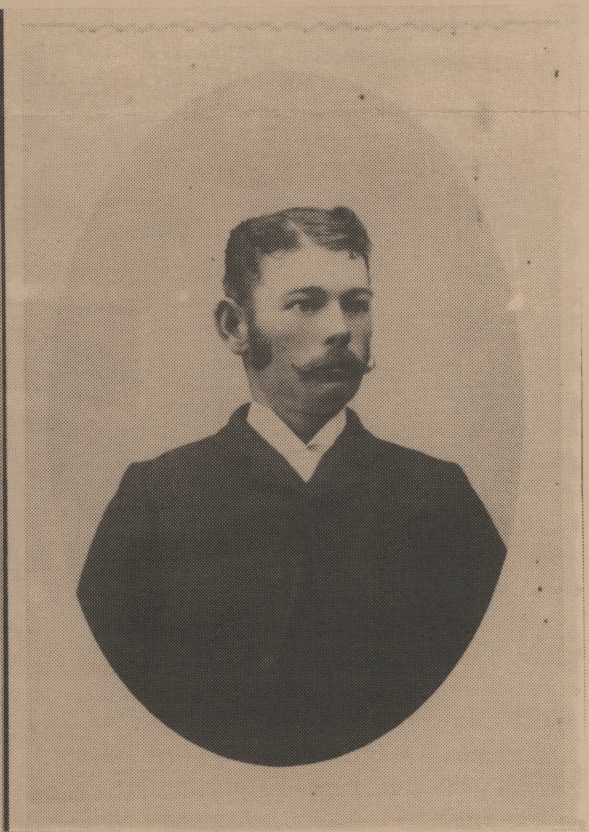
COMMEMORATE THE LAFAYETTE COMMUNITY

By Diddo Clark

The Lafayette Historical Society has a couple of ideas for stamps commemorating Lafayette's 150th birthday on February 9, 1998. The first is to ask the Lafayette Post Office to create, and use throughout 1998, a commemorative cancellation mark to cancel the stamps on all envelopes which are canceled by the Lafayette Post Office that year. The second is to ask the U.S. Post Office to issue a Lafayette 150th anniversary commemorative postage stamp with First Day Cover ceremonies in Lafayette on February 9, 1998. The first idea seems feasible, at least for some period of time. However, the second idea appears to be a long shot, but its odds will improve if there are lots of letters written in support. **If you want a Lafayette postage stamp, please write postal headquarters now and ask for it.** The address is:

Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee
U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza West
S.W. Room 5800
Washington, D.C. 20260-6352

Here's my letter to them: "Re: Request for Lafayette Stamp. Dear Citizens on the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, The Marquis de Lafayette was a major U.S Revolutionary War hero. There have been a few U.S. stamps issued in his honor. Please create another one to coincide with the 150th birthday of Lafayette, California, on February 9, 1998. Thank you very much. Sincerely, The Lafayette Historical Society."



Speaking of stamps, shown here is a picture of Carrie Hough (later Van Meter) and Frank Albert Hough. Carrie was born in 1871 and died in 1955. She is buried in the Lafayette Cemetery. Carrie was Lafayette's postmistress from 1904 to 1927. Frank Hough was 24 years old when this picture was taken. He was born on June 6, 1865, and died in February 17, 1926.

Editor's note: Jennie Bickerstaff Rosenberg's 1956 talk before a Lafayette meeting of the Contra Costa Historical Society is continued here. The first two parts of Mrs. Rosenberg's review of Lafayette history was presented in the March and April of 1994 issues of this publication.

Early Lafayette History,

continued

by Jennie Bickerstaff Rosenberg

In speaking of what kind of man he was, Elam Brown--and it says here he was called...Oh, I forgot--something very important--I didn't say that in 1849 he was one of the delegates sent to Monterey to help form our state constitution and he also served two terms in the Legislature. He refused to be a representative again and wanted to work on his farm. Now what sort of man was he, well, he was called "Square" Brown sometimes and the term "Square" Brown was always because he was a man of great integrity. This is one of his slogans--this is very very good, I like to think of Elam Brown as a man everything to be proud of and that we can say that we are glad we had such a good man to be the first settler in Lafayette and it says here in local history and all the various surroundings and petitions "Through life I have never struck or been struck, never run for or from a man or boy, I have had losses or intention a and I have never let debt set unerased on cards and dealt in law suits--Scotch I was never intoxicated by liquor, although I was raised in a tavern but I never dealt in the article since I have never cheated a man knowingly out of a dollar but the reverse has occasionally occurred-I don't intend this as a boast but an acknowledgment of the blessings bestowed upon me through long life and my good end."

Elam Brown died in 1889, at the age of 92. Grandma Brown died in 1884 at the age of 89 years. They are buried in the Martinez Cemetery.

Now there's just a little bit more, I was asked to say a little about my own life. My father came here in 1868. He was here for several years, went back to Pennsylvania and married in 1875. Mother, father, and I came to California. We had a little place that is just south of the town hall. There was no town hall then, there was no road above. Our little place joined the Dutch Hamlin's place and I used to play with Doctor Hamlin--it wasn't doctor then-but he was just a small boy..... "Jennie"

continued on page 4.

1994-95 Officers and Committee Chairs

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L.H.S.'s Newsletter staff:

Editor ..... Jane Spangler
Senior at St. Mary's College. (472-0158)

Assistant Editor.....Diddo Clark
(906-0966)

Please feel free to write us at:
Letters-to-the-Editor
3555 So. Silver Spgs. Rd.
Lafayette, CA 94549

SPECIAL NOTE

Elly Conrad has been appointed, by Marechal Duncan, L.H.S president, to fill the unfinished term on the Board of Directors of Shirley Thomson who resigned Jan. 24th. Elly will be the Newsletter Editor after the April edition and also be the Publicity chairperson.

EXCITING UPCOMING EVENTS!!!!!!

Next Board Meeting.....March 14
7:30 PM

**Will be held at Mr.Van Overveen's home at 1057 Dalores Drive.*

Annual Potluck.....May 9
Enjoy an evening with fellow members and hear a very interesting speaker!

EARLY LAFAYETTE HISTORY

"Jennie" continued from page 3.....

Later on, my mother was not very well so we went back to Pennsylvania in 1877 and there two years. Then in 1879 when we came here and my father bought an acre of land from Elam Brown just across the way, as I said, Josiah Allen helped my father build two front rooms in 1892. My first school was the Moraga School now that was in Orinda. They speak of another school in the other end of the Valley, that was known at that time as the Willis Spring School. I was there seven years and nothing happened, something very difficult too--I got a very wonderful amount of sixty dollars a month and taught all grades and one year of high school. In those days we didn't have a high school around and it was thought best to give the children the advantage of at least a year of high school. The teachers; one teacher or two teachers per perhaps three were the ones to bring this knowledge of the wonderful first year of high school to the pupil. I might say that my trustees were Mr. Marler, he had a fish ranch, Mr. Ed Gerow who had the blacksmith shop and Mrs. Houstin. It was a very interesting school--many pleasant things happened. Here is the picture of the school you see and my first way of going was by horseback. Five miles around the road, three miles over the hill and then we go into the gate up here where Mr. Taylor lived at that time (it is now where the dam is) and go up through there and go through and do this, get it back again and get on your horse again and go on. Well that was a little too hard and later on, I had a horse and cart so that was still better and I had a little horse. When I came home sometimes in the afternoon I had Esther Gerow with me and I dropped her home. Mrs. Gerow would come out and say "I just baked bread today and have churned butter, now you must have a piece of bread and butter" and it was good too. So I have very pleasant memories. When I think of one little boy, little Tony in the first grade, and we had, yes here is a picture of a hen and underneath HEN, the word hen. Now Tony, what is this? We were teaching words by pictures, what is this now "That is chick-en." You recognize this so when you see a hen you just call it Chick-en. There are other very pleasant memories....Mrs. McNeil she and Alma Reynolds and Esther Gerow was Mrs. Simmons and one other for the first seven years. Then I think Lafayette dispensed with all the schools--two teacher school then and the new school, the first school if I may say school house is still in the rear and is taught by Miss Peterson--then later on went to Pacheco. I taught there six and a half years. Very fine people there--they treated me wonderfully. Then Dr. Leech came to Pacheco and wanted me to come to Walnut Creek--that was Christmas time and I said, no, I can't come until the end of the year if you're still willing I can come then--so at the end of the year they were willing so I went there. The Trustees were Dr. Leech, Mr. Cole, and Captain Duncan. Oh, When I saw Mr. Cola he said "Oh, I knew you when you lived in Lafayette, you had curls then, I know you." So I was there and started teaching when I was eighteen. Then I went back full time for twenty-one years in Walnut Creek and Saranap.

Then I have been asked what kind of entertainment did you have? You didn't have any T.V., you didn't have any radio, what did you do? We had dime socials and the money from that dime social helped pay the minister's salary. We had May Day Picnics every May Day. I remember one time when I was playing the organ, it was kind of a rainy day, not real rain, but there was a little Bertham Cerri who held the umbrella over me while I played the organ. Then we had, oh yes, we had Christmas.....

Lafayette Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE, CALIF. 94549

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL FORM

last name | first name | spouse's first name

street address | phone number

city, state, zip code | date

Annual dues: Please check appropriate line indicating amount of dues payable, attach your check in the amount shown—adding any contribution you can make toward the fire engine repair fund—and mail to **Lafayette Historical Society, P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549.**

___ Student membership - $ 2.50
___ Family membership - $ 10.00
___ Business membership - $ 50.00
___ Life membership - $100.00

DUES $_____
Contribution to help maintain fire engine _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: $_____

Please indicate your areas of special interest

___ Archives
___ Landmarks
___ Fire engine
___ Telephone committee
___ Annual potluck dinner committee
___ Research
___ Other: _____

___ Oral history
___ Photograph collection
___ Newspaper clippings
___ Walking tours
___ Displays

Shirley Thomson
563 Monarch Ridge Drive
Walnut Creek CA 94596

First Class Mail

Lafayette Historical Society
P.O. Box 133
Lafayette, CA 94549

Happy New Year! Yes, its that time again; time to renew your membership with L.H.S. Be sure to send your renewal application (pg. 5) and dues to us. Encourage your friends and family to join as well. Or, to avoid the hassle, check out our super lifetime membership which will provide you with historical information and events about your town!

- Please call Oliver Hamlin, membership chairman, at 284-1446 or Marechal Duncan at 283-6812 with names and phone numbers of any interested potential members.